

VZCZCXRO2445  
OO RUEHIHL  
DE RUEHIHL #0017/01 0511217  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
O 201217Z FEB 08  
FM REO HILLAH  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1032  
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 0892  
RUEHIHL/REO HILLAH 1095

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 HILLAH 000017

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/20/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ ARMY GENERAL: SECURITY IS STABLE IN DIWANIYAH BUT  
PESSIMISTIC ABOUT JAM CEASE-FIRE

CLASSIFIED BY: Robert Pitre, PRT Team Leader, REO Al Hillah,  
Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (c), (d)

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: Eighth Iraq Army Division (8th IAD) Major-General Farhood Uthman believes the general security situation in south central Iraq is good, although he fears a return of insurgent activity in Diwaniyah is possible. He believes the JAM cease-fire will not hold and said that local police are under-funded and under-equipped. He also said that the Diwaniyah Province Governor has been more cooperative recently with coalition forces. End Summary.

¶2. (S/NF) On January 30, PRT Team Leader (with former PRT Leader along to make introductions) and PRToffs traveled to Diwaniyah for the MND CS change-of-command ceremony for newly arrived Major-General Andrej Malinowski. That afternoon we met with Eighth Iraq Army Division (8th IAD) Major-General Farhood Uthman, whose command extends over Qadasiyah, Najaf, Karbala, Wasit, and Babil provinces.

-----  
General Security Situation  
-----

¶3. (S/NF) Uthman offered a reasonably upbeat assessment of the improved security climate around Diwaniyah. Although there are challenges, Uthman said that after Operation Lion's Pounce (where coalition forces launched a major operation against JAM elements to establish control over the eastern part of the city, which had been heavily infiltrated and had become a JAM stronghold), the region has quieted, security has been established, and "Diwaniyah is waiting" for the PRT's relocation to Camp Echo.

-----  
Insurgents Attempting to Return to Diwaniyah  
-----

¶4. (S/NF) Although Uthman estimates that 70 percent of the insurgent element in Diwaniyah has been captured, he believes that they are again recruiting. The province was quiet for the Shi'a holy days of Ashura; however, Uthman fears that insurgents will try to take advantage of Arbeyeen (40 days after Ashura), when he expects approximately six million people to travel to the region. Uthman believes that insurgents are trying to return to the city because "Diwaniyah is the heart of South Central Iraq."

¶5. (S/NF) During Arbeyeen, as the GOI focuses security in the Karbala region, Uthman fears that insurgents will regroup outside Karbala, where they'll expect the security presence to be less heavy. Uthman said that he has been preoccupied with security preparations, including an extensive plan for vehicle

checks at the province's and city's borders. Uthman said that the IA will begin screening and tracking pilgrims from the time they enter Diwaniyah en route to Karbala.

¶16. (S/NF) When asked whether a second IAD battalion had been authorized for the province, Uthman responded that no final decision had been reached but that a second battalion is essential to maintain order.

-----  
JAM  
-----

¶17. (S/NF) Uthman is not optimistic the JAM cease-fire will hold. JAM "continues to engage in activities and are not even following in full the cease-fire." He believes that the JAM leadership would like a return to violence to destabilize and gain advantage in the run up to local elections.

-----  
Local police  
-----

¶18. (S/NF) Although the local police force remains heavily infiltrated with militia members, the quality of the force is improving. Uthman (who enjoys a close relationship with the local police chief, Brigadier-General Safa Kadum Jassim) stated that the police need more support, such as basic equipment, suitable vehicles, and proper buildings.

¶19. (S/NF) When queried about a report that a T-72 tank had been sighted outside a police office, General Uthman responded emphatically that the tank belonged to the Iraqi Army and that he had twelve under his command.

HILLAH 00000017 002 OF 002

-----  
The Governor  
-----

¶10. (S/NF) Although Uthman and coalition forces have not had a warm relationship with Diwaniyah Governor Al-Khudar (ISCI/Badr) in the past, Uthman believes that the Governor has been reaching out to, and has been more cooperative with, coalition forces. Uthman theorizes that the Governor is reaching out politically for electoral purposes. He thinks that local elections could be held as soon as three months from now.

¶11. (S/NF) Comment: We are encouraged by Uthman's assessment that the security situation in Diwaniyah has been stabilized. Although there have been fears of a recent insurgent return into Diwaniyah city, another of our interlocutors discounts those fears ("I don't see it"). End Comment.  
PITRE